

WAKESHMA TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING

February 3, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Supervisor Gatlin called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. *Present:* Gatlin, Fry, Munn, Bennett and Thole. *Absent:* None

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve the consent agenda moved by Munn. Seconded by Thole.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Munn reviewed the Treasurer's Report – to include the General Savings, General Checking, Tax Checking, Trust & Agency, and Michigan CLASS Account.

Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report moved by Thole. Seconded by Bennett.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

A citizen expressed her frustration with a neighboring property running their sump pump onto her property at 14141 S. 42nd Street, Fulton, MI. This reportedly causes excessive amounts of water to sit on her property which creates muddy conditions. She claims that she is unable to access the property due to the current conditions. Supervisor Gatlin believed that this complaint would need to be escalated to the Health Department for action. Supervisor Gatlin told the citizen that he would contact the Health Department on her behalf to identify the correct course of action to resolve the situation.

A separate citizen inquired about the legalization of marijuana in the state of Michigan and asked how much money each municipality, to include Wakeshma Township, would receive once those funds are distributed to local governments. Supervisor Gatlin replied that the formula that is used to distribute those funds is dependent on the number of dispensaries that are operating in each municipality. Commercial grow operations do not impact the formula. Therefore, he does not anticipate Wakeshma Township receiving any funds from this revenue source because we do not have any dispensaries in the township. The citizen was upset after she recalled how the statewide campaign for the legalization of marijuana misled voters with the "Pot For Potholes" slogan to help pass the ballot proposal.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Local Roads – 2025 Contracts

Supervisor Gatlin provided an update on the condition of the local roads as it pertains to their maintenance during the winter months. First, he is impressed with how well the projects on V Avenue are holding up. He mentioned that V Avenue

is part of an experimental paving project that uses rubber scrap tires that are recycled and repurposed into material that is applied during construction on local roads. However, he is less impressed with other projects – primarily W Avenue which is a ‘Class A’ road and was recently resurfaced. It appears that snowplows have stripped the crown this winter which is likely a result from the pressure settings on the snowplow trucks. Supervisor Gatlin plans to speak to the Road Commission about the matter.

Supervisor Gatlin also provided an overview of the Road Committee’s project proposals for the 2025 calendar year. These projects included an assortment of chip sealing, gravel resurfacing, wedging, and culvert work throughout Wakeshma Township. Trustee Bennett raised questions about a specific project involving X Avenue between 40th and 42nd Street. Trustee Bennett expressed his concern that X Avenue is in such disrepair that simply patching and resurfacing that stretch of road won’t likely hold up in the long-term. Trustee Bennett felt that this particular project may not be the most prudent use of the road funding. Supervisor Gatlin invited Trustee Bennett to come to the next Road Committee meeting [currently scheduled for Wednesday – Feb. 5th – at 6:00PM] to raise his concerns about the X Avenue project with the rest of the Road Committee. Supervisor Gatlin informed the Board that the road projects will have to be voted on at the March meeting in order to meet the Road Commission’s pending deadlines.

T Avenue

Supervisor Gatlin shared e-mail correspondence that he received from Supervisor Trent Piper with Climax Township concerning a request for Wakeshma Township to split the costs of a local road project on T Avenue. This road is the dividing line between Wakeshma Township and Climax Township. Supervisor Gatlin mentioned that there is a precedent set where other municipalities split the costs of such projects. After reviewing the numbers, Clerk Fry proposed postponing further discussion on this particular project until the next meeting.

Motion to postpone discussion on the T Avenue project moved by Fry. Seconded by Bennett.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

Budget Allocations

Supervisor Gatlin reviewed the 2024 budget and proposed a series of amendments that totaled \$33,446.33. Supervisor Gatlin shared that the vast majority of the discrepancies were derived from Wakeshma Township transitioning to QuickBooks Online in the 2024 calendar year. At times, this resulted in the incorrect line item being used in the system. For example, one of the budget amendments he shared included moving \$1,200.00 from “191-702 Election Salaries” over to “101-262 Election Inspectors Pay”.

Motion to approve the budget amendments totaling \$33,446.33 moved by Gatlin. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

Annual Budget

Supervisor Gatlin reviewed the draft budget for the next year. He shared with the Board that everyone is provided with copies of the draft budget in the February meeting. The Board will vote on finalizing the annual budget at next month’s meeting. The Fiscal Year begins on April 1, 2025.

ROAD COMMITTEE

Supervisor Gatlin shared that the Road Committee will be meeting at the Township Hall on Wednesday – Feb. 5th – at 6:00PM.

CORRESPONDENCE

Supervisor Gatlin informed the Board that the only correspondence to share with the group is the aforementioned e-mail communication with Supervisor Trent Piper from Climax Township.

ZONING ENFORCEMENT

N/A

SHERIFF'S REPORT

N/A

FIRE AUTHORITY

Supervisor Gatlin reported that the Fire Authority continues to be deadlocked where three municipalities [Schoolcraft Township, Village of Schoolcraft, and Village of Vicksburg] remain at odds with the other three municipalities [Brady Township, Prairie Ronde Township, and Wakeshma Township]. Supervisor Gatlin shared that it is clear that the six municipalities no longer have a shared vision for the future of the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority. Supervisor Gatlin reported that Brady Township has officially reached an agreement with Pavilion Township to provide Fire Protection and Emergency Services. Brady Township will be leaving the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority as discussed in the January meeting.

In the meantime, Supervisor Gatlin has been doing his due diligence in exploring different options for Wakeshma Township since our last meeting. He said that partnering with Pavilion Township and Brady Township is not an option. He also shared that partnering with a Fire Department that is outside of Kalamazoo County is possible but there are second- and third-order effects that need to be taken into consideration when weighing such an option. For example, such a move would not only complicate central dispatch procedures and protocol but it may also impact the Kalamazoo Valley Intergovernmental Ambulance Agreement (KVIAA). He felt that the most realistic and practical option for Wakeshma Township was reaching an agreement with Climax Township should the Board decide to leave the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority.

A respectful conversation between Board members and the general public in attendance followed as different individuals offered their respective opinions on the matter. One private citizen shared that he felt that the firefighters in Climax Township are supportive of the prospect of Wakeshma Township and Climax Township coming to an agreement. He also believed that there are volunteer firefighters in the area that refuse to be a part of the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority but have recently expressed their desire to join the department should an agreement between Wakeshma Township and Climax Township be formed. He felt that such an agreement was long overdue. Many of the citizens in attendance shared similar sentiments.

Clerk Fry shared his appreciation for everyone's feedback. Clerk Fry expressed that Climax Township seemed like the best fit for the township – but such a move would likely require Wakeshma Township to consider raising additional revenue in the near future to put towards Fire Protection and Emergency Services. Supervisor Gatlin shared that opinion as well.

Supervisor Gatlin informed the Board that the window to opt out of the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority was closing fast. Wakeshma Township would need to reach an agreement with Climax Township in the next six weeks in order to give proper notice and withdraw from the Fire Authority during their March meeting. The Board continued to discuss the matter and decided to move forward and give Supervisor Gatlin the authority to pursue an agreement with Climax Township.

Motion to give Supervisor Gatlin the authority to 1.) pursue a partnership agreement with Climax Township for Fire Protection and Emergency Services, and 2.) engage with legal counsel throughout this process as needed, in order to bring such an agreement back to the Township Board for final approval moved by Fry. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

Motion to cover up to \$500 of any costs incurred by the Climax Township Board of Directors holding a special meeting in the month of February to finalize a partnership agreement between Wakeshma Township and Climax Township for Fire Protection and Emergency Services moved by Fry. Seconded by Munn.

Motion carried unanimously. 5:0

BOARD COMMENTS

Bennett – None.

Munn – The Board of Review is scheduled to meet at the Township Hall to examine and review the 2025 assessment roll. The board will convene on the following dates for the hearing of appeals of assessments or taxable values, poverty exemptions, parcel classification appeals and/or current year qualified agricultural denials:

Tuesday, March 4th, 2025. 1:00PM Organizational Meeting

Monday, March 10th, 2025. 10:00AM – 1:00PM and 6:00PM – 9:00PM.

Tuesday, March 11th, 2025. 10:00AM – 1:00PM and 3:00PM – 6:00PM.

Appointments are required. Notices concerning additional details about this process are posted at the Township Hall, Post Office, and Fulton Little Store.

Gatlin – He appreciates everyone's patience tonight. He knows that it was a long meeting but he appreciates the fact that we were able to have a productive, respectful conversation on agenda items that greatly affect the future of Wakeshma Township for years to come.

Fry – He attended the "Election Coordinating Committee Agreement" on January 28th, 2025 at the Expo Center to sign the 2025 School Coordinating Agreements with school districts in Kalamazoo County and Saint Joseph County. He is scheduled to attend a similar meeting on February 18th, 2025 in Marshall, MI to sign similar agreements with Athens Area Schools, Calhoun County ISD, and Kellogg Community College.

He also shared that the County Clerk informed all of the Township Clerks that local municipalities need to begin to prepare to fund early voting efforts beginning in 2026. The state government has not passed any legislation that would cover such costs in 2026 and beyond. Additionally, local municipalities need to be prepared to purchase new election equipment in 2027 and 2028. No further details concerning the scope or financial burden that Townships will incur from these mandates.

Thole – SCMCCI held a meeting in January where the organization elected officers for the new calendar year. She was elected as an Alternate Board Member.

Supervisor Gatlin adjourned the meeting at 9:06PM